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FACTS ABOUT THE MEAT SITUATION

Back in the pre-war years of 1935-39, the average American was consuming an average of 126 pounds of meat each year. During the first 3 months of 1944, we were eating meat at the average annual rate of 158 pounds per capita -- just a few pounds under the 163 pounds per capita consumption in 1908, which was the highest on record in the United States. The per capita rate of consumption for the full year is expected to be about 145 pounds.

At present prices, if sufficient meat of the kinds demanded by consumers were available, the per capita consumption would likely be boosted to between 165 and 170 pounds. With more money for food, demand for the higher grade cuts of meat has risen while, at the same time, the supply of these higher grade cuts has dropped.

For the current 6 months of the fiscal year -- July through December 1944 -- it is estimated there will be available for distribution for all purposes, 12.4 billion pounds of meat. Of this, 9.1 billion pounds are expected to be available from federally inspected supplies; the remainder is made up of non-federally inspected meat and is not available for purchase by Federal agencies.

How Meat is Allocated: The total of federally inspected meats for the 6 month period is allocated as follows: 2.6 billion pounds to the armed services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, etc.); 1.3 billion to the Office of Distribution, War Food Administration, for distribution to the United Kingdom, British War Services, Russia, the liberated areas, Red Cross, and other war agencies for which OD is the buying agent; 58 million pounds for commercial export; and 5.2 billion pounds for U. S. civilians, which along with 3.2 billion pounds of non-federally inspected meat should give civilians a total of 8.4 billion pounds, or 130 pounds per capita, at an annual rate. Any increase in supplies over the estimates or any failure on the part of claimant agencies to take their full allocations will result, as in the past, in additional quantities for civilian use.

Production is Boosted: It is expected that meat production will almost reach 25 billion pounds this calendar year, which is a 3-percent increase over 1943 and $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the average production of pre-war years. About 43 percent of these 25 billion pounds will be beef and veal; a little over 50 percent pork; and the remainder will be lamb and mutton. During the past 5 years, cattle have increased at the rate of 3 million head a year. In World War I, the production peak was 73 million and in 1934, before World War II, it was 74 million. At the beginning of 1944 cattle numbers had risen to more than 82 million head. With the exception of India, where the cow is sacred, the United States has more cattle than any other country on earth. We have a third more cattle than Russia and twice as many as Argentina or Brazil.

Feed Supply Important: Production of grass, hay, and grain is closely tied in with the United States meat supply. Because of price relationships and because the feed grain supply during the last year has been short in relation to the greatly expanded total livestock numbers, heavy feeding for prime beef has declined. While grass alone produces acceptable beef, the best and most desirable beef is produced by finishing on corn and other concentrates in the feed lot. Most of the beef slaughtered during the next few months will be marketed directly from grass.

More Utility Beef: Less of the total beef supply during the next few months will be Choice and Good and more will be Commercial and Utility Grades. Although in

Appearance Utility beef lacks the marbling of the more desirable cuts, it is just as nutritious as the better grades but requires more time and care in cooking.

Hog Production Up: The heavy marketing of hogs during the first half of 1944 was the result of two record-breaking pig crops. The 1943 spring pig crop of 74 million head was the largest on record, being 22 percent greater than the crop of 1942 and 50 percent greater than that of 1941. The fall pig crop was 48 million head, 4.2 million more than in 1942 and 21.1 million more than the 1935-39 average.

Farmers Reduce 1944 Crop: Packing house facilities were not sufficient last winter and spring to handle hogs as fast as farmers brought them to market. Some stockyards resorted to permit systems to hold back the flood of hogs, and the situation was eased for a time in March between the spring and fall crops. Shortly afterward the supply began backing up again and the problem did not clear up until July. Recognizing that livestock numbers were getting out of line with available feed supplies, farmers were urged as early as midsummer of 1943 to reduce breeding operations and feed to lighter weights. As a result, farmers reduced their 1944 spring farrowing about 24 percent. Although this seems a rather sharp decline, production is still on a higher level than before the war. Because of this reduction in the spring pig crop, however, pork will not be as plentiful this winter as it was last.

Set Aside for Military: Packers operating under Federal inspection have been required by the War Food Administration to set aside definite percentages of certain cuts of pork for war agencies. At present this will amount to about a third of the pork slaughtered under Federal inspection. This does not mean that the civilian supply will be reduced one-third. The Government has been buying that much or more right along, and we probably will continue to eat more pork per person than any other country. The United States has produced about a fifth of the pork in the world and, since the war, considerable quantities of domestic pork have been going to Russia and Britain. Nearly all our lend-lease meat, estimated at more than 2½ billion pounds this year, is pork.

Sheep Numbers Decline: As cattle and hog numbers have increased, sheep numbers have declined. Slaughter of sheep and lambs exceeded all previous records in 1943, but a part of this slaughter represented a reduction in the numbers of breeding stock. The number of sheep slaughtered this fall will probably be less, meaning a slight reduction in the amount of lamb and mutton on the market this coming winter. While cattle and hog numbers have been boosted during the war, the number of sheep is still the same as in 1939, when the war in Europe broke out. During 1943 the total of all sheep in the United States declined from 55.8 million head to 51.7 million head. Lamb and mutton make up only about 4 percent of the total meat supply.

Meat Supply Round-up: Because the American farmer has broken all production records to provide meat, we have enough to sustain the armed forces at the battle front, enough to supply our allies, and to provide the civilian consumer with more than he ate before the war. Although war economy has resulted in less feeding to a high finish, thereby cutting down on the availability of higher grade cuts of beef, there will be enough meat to go around. However, the next few months will find -- owing to the reasons given -- the following supply picture:

Beef -- Available at most meat counters, desirable grade cuts continuing scarce.
Veal -- Slaughter heavy -- About same quantity available during past several months.

Pork -- Supplies limited for next few weeks or until late November, when the spring pig crop begins moving to market in volume.

Lamb and Mutton -- Supplies affected by reduced lamb crop. Less of this kind of meat than last year as a whole, although current heavy marketing season should slightly increase supply for the next 5 or 6 weeks.